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ABSTRACT

Findings from a study that examined high schools involved in school restructuring to determine the effect of restructuring on the educational experiences of persons along the axis of oppression are presented in this paper. A second focus was to explore the utility of feminist poststructural theories in educational administration research. The following areas were examined in both the content and process of restructuring--language, subjectivity, power, and underlying assumptions. A critical, qualitative analysis of one urban and one rural high school was conducted; the results of the latter are presented in this paper. Methodology involved interviews with three school administrators, two district administrators, and three teachers; document analysis; and classroom observation. Findings pointed to three empowering aspects of restructuring for students: committed teachers; a focus on curriculum, instruction, and student achievement; and openness to research-based information. Constraints included a restructuring discourse centered around the power elite; an agreement on the legitimacy of the power structure; and lack of attention to social power issues and student identity. The recommendation is made to include teacher dialogue in "adhocratic" groups. The research implies ways in which the poststructural perspective facilitates openness to multiple perspectives. (17 references) (LMI)

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". . . and justice for all"

Secondary school restructuring and nondominant groups: A poststructural analysis

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". . . and justice for all"

Secondary school restructuring and and nondominant groups: A poststructural analysis

The 1268 students from grades pre-K to twelve in the rural Crestwood School District repeated the words in the title of this report, ". . . and justice for all," daily, as part of their morning pledge, solemnly repeated while standing and facing the American flag, directed in unison over each school's intercom system by a student. For the three-year-old student in the district's early childhood program for students with disabilities, these words could be repeated 2700 times over the next 15 years of the child's schooling.

The designers of the restructuring of secondary education would probably not dispute the words ". . . and justice for all," given that their driving purpose is to increase the engagement and intellectual achievement of all students (Boyer, 1983; Goodlad, 1984; Newmann, 1990; Seashore Louis & Miles, 1990). Indeed, the educational success of "all" students is a central theme of Crestwood's restructuring efforts. A closer look at the literature on restructuring secondary education, however, indicates that although efforts allude to equity issues and to the achievement of students of color and of low socioeconomic class; for the most part, this literature gives gender relatively little attention and virtually ignores students with disabilities

and lesbian or gay students. In addition, the restructuring literature focuses primarily on urban schools and tends to ignore the unique dynamics of rural communities. Thus, even though the literature on school restructuring advocates that the educational achievement of all students be enhanced, researchers have given little attention to the educational needs of the range of persons along the axis of oppression. The literature also does not consider the parallels between equity issues for some nondominant groups, and the history of exclusion for others. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine high schools significantly involved in school restructuring to determine if and to what extent restructuring serves particular values and interests and silences others. A second goal of the study was to explore the utility of feminist poststructuralist theories in educational administration research.

Theoretical framework

Feminist poststructural theories (Cherryholmes, 1990; Giroux, 1991; Lather, 1991) guided this study. Feminist poststructural theories refer to the interactions and contradictions among subjectivity, power, language, and unquestioned, underlying assumptions (i.e., common sense) that are used to examine "how power is exercised" (Weedon, 1987) and the potential for change. From this perspective, power relations are viewed through subjectivity in terms of identity, experience,

process, access, and selection; power itself in terms of conflict and dissensus, covert modes of domination, and resistance to power; and language and its authority, history, and availability. The interaction among subjectivity, power, and language contribute to "common sense" assumptions about the constraining and enabling aspects of social life (Capper, in press).

To determine if and to what extent secondary school restructuring serves particular values and interests and silences others, I examined the following in both the content and process of restructuring. These objectives and their parallels and intersections were based on the literature, the theoretical framework, and were shaped by the preliminary data collected in the study:

Language. I examined the language the participants used to describe their restructuring efforts as well as the language used in district and school information materials. I considered the competing meanings people inscribed to restructuring, how language about restructuring shifted depending on the role and institutional power of the participant, the authority and impetus behind the restructuring, and how the discourse of restructuring was made available and to whom. In this paper, I do not explore to any depth the historical basis of the language in use.

Subjectivity. I considered how subjectivity was constituted in the restructuring goals and process, including how varying perspectives of power (e.g., nondominant group representation)

were included in the restructuring process and decision making, and who benefitted from the restructuring.

Power. I considered participants perspectives on the extent of consensus and dissensus in the restructuring process, and their perceptions of the extent of power, control, and domination, the points of resistance in the process, and how this resistance was interpreted.

Common sense. I considered the underlying "common sense" assumptions which emanated from the interweaving of language, subjectivity, and power, and the underlying assumptions ["natural, appropriate, moral, or good", (Weedon, 1987, p. 77)] associated with the restructuring efforts.

Methodology

Design. The design of this study was based on critical, qualitative inquiry (Anderson, 1991; Lather, 1986). This methodology calls for not only routine kinds of qualitative methodologies such as interviews, document analysis, and participant observation, but also requires extensive participation by the all people involved in the research.

Participants. The participants of the study were associated with one small rural high school and one urban high school which were considered to have been engaged in significant restructuring efforts (as determined by the Center on the Organization and Restructuring of Schools [CORS]) sponsored by the U.S. Department

of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement. CORS classification is based on significant restructuring in the areas of student experiences, the work life of teachers, the organization and management of schools, and the coordination of community resources. These sites were selected not only because they met the CORS criteria in at least three dimensions, but also because they permit comparisons to be made between rural and urban schools in terms of geographic region as well as comparison of a school attended by a significant number of minority students with a school whose student body is comprised primarily of white, middle-class students. Although both high schools were involved in outcomes-based education, school improvement processes based on the effective schools research, total quality improvement based on Deming, and peer coaching and collaboration, the rural school district's restructuring efforts pivoted on principles associated with outcomes-based education. While two schools are being studied, this report provides the preliminary findings only from the rural school district, with the pseudonym, Crestwood.

The Crestwood School District is located one hour from a major metropolitan area, in the midst of dairy farms and corn fields, with 98.5 percent of its population white and not of Hispanic origin. Eighteen percent of its students receive free or reduced price lunches, and 11 percent are identified for special education programs. Crestwood boasts a comprehensive early childhood education program with its full day, everyday

kindergarten, Head Start within one elementary school, and programs for three to five year olds with disabilities. Just 2.9% of Crestwood's students dropout before graduating from high school.

Procedures/instrumentation. To address the research questions, procedures included interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. When negotiating site entry, I informally observed in several classrooms at the elementary, junior high and high school level. I also informally interviewed two of the elementary principals, the high school principal and his assistant, the district administrator, and the director of special education/pupil services. The entry also included a tour of three of the four schools in the district. After negotiating site entry, I conducted one-hour interviews with the district administrator, the high school principal and his assistant principal, the director of special education/pupil services, and an elementary principal. In these interviews, I asked for the names of junior high and high school teachers who were experiencing the most success with their restructuring efforts. Four teachers were consistently named: two at the junior high level, one math teacher and one science teacher; and two at the high school level: one english teacher and one math teacher. Among these four teachers, two were male and two were female. I also conducted one hour interviews with three of these teachers. All of the interviews with the exception of one, were

taped and transcribed. Some interviews went beyond one hour, and including the site entry interviews, interviews totaled 12 hours.

I also observed in the classrooms of these four teachers, observing two full class periods for each teacher: one class considered to be their "lower track" class, and the other class considered to be their "upper track" class. Thus, classroom observations totaled 10 hours. I also collected "documents" from the district including their information on restructuring and staff information. This paper reports on all this data and its interpretation. This paper does not include the data from additional interviews which are in progress with students, parents, and community members. In addition, follow-up interviews are in progress with all the previous interviewees which will solicit a discussion on their transcribed interviews. These participants will read all interview transcripts and copies of field notes. They will also make suggestions for possible themes emerging from the data, and provide feedback on the final reports of the study. In essence, this paper reports the perspectives of those in the upper portion of the governance hierarchy in the district and teachers in the next layer of the hierarchy. These teachers, however, were those who had "bought into" the restructuring principles more than any other teachers in the school, and two had had intense involvement with the curriculum steering committee. Thus, this paper reports the

perspectives of those in the upper slice of power in the restructuring of the district.

Analysis. I initially listed the limitations of outcomes-based education, based on a previous analysis (Capper & Jamison, 1992), and listed the major constructs of feminist poststructural theory. I then read through each of the transcribed interviews, field notes, classroom observation notes, and documents, and highlighted possible themes, recording each theme on a separate index card. I used the constant comparative method of qualitative data analysis (Glazer & Strauss, 1967) in this process. That is, I did not specifically search for themes which aligned with the poststructuralist theories or the limitations of OBE. I did, however, pay attention to the language participants used and themes possibly related to power. As such, the findings could have been presented a number of different ways. I could have ordered them according to the four areas of restructuring noted by the National Center on Restructuring, mentioned previously, or I could have ordered the findings according to the four constructs of poststructural theory. I have chosen to present four major themes related to the findings which incorporate both the restructuring principles and the poststructural constructs--themes which were voiced by the participants themselves: a) "Pioneers, settlers, and cattle:" The restructuring governance and process, b) "The right thing:"

What is it and for whom? c) "What's essential?": Student experiences, and d) "Flying in the fog:" Teachers' work-lives. Within each theme, I pay particular attention to power issues associated with the language, identity of participants, and the unquestioned, underlying assumptions, to uncover both the constraining and enabling aspects of their restructuring efforts.

Findings

Pioneers, settlers, and cattle: The restructuring governance and process.

> I'm sure there's always a few people you know they say there are pioneers and there are settlers and you have to be tolerant of all of them. . . I mean some of the settlers have said why don't we just wait, you know you keep telling us the state's going to have these mandates for outcomes, why don't we just wait. . . And I said well ya, we could be followers, but wouldn't you rather be leaders, wouldn't you rather be on the cutting edge and some of them wouldn't and I understand that (administrator).
>
> Teachers. . . are [at] different points in a spectrum of change and improvement and progress and ah um to get everybody along, sometimes it's like being on a cattle drive. . . (another administrator).
>
> . . . a few [teachers] . . . they feel a little overwhelmed with this kind of stuff here, but they don't see it as being a whole lot different than what they're doing, except the fact that ah they feel a little bit pressured into ah just doing this and dropping all the things that they've been doing in the past. I don't think that's the way to go either (teacher).

To examine the restructuring governance and process, I describe the history of Crestwood's restructuring efforts, the identity and power of those involved in the efforts, the

participant's views of their errors in the process, and some of the associated unquestioned, underlying assumptions.

Restructuring history. Crestwood's restructuring began 5 years ago, initiated in part by a new district superintendent responding to his board's admonition to create a "national" class school district, and the high school principal's concern with the percentage of junior high and high school students receiving failing grades in their courses. Over the years, a homework policy was instituted, a remediation period was added to the end of the day, teachers were released from study hall and lunch supervision and asked to "remediate" their students, and a consortium of four school districts was created who then hired a "curriculum architect" (i.e., consultant) to guide them through a process of developing an outcomes-based curriculum system. This process included the development of a "curriculum coordinating committee" (or CCC) in each district and subject area committees (SAC) for each subject area in each school. Teachers in similar subject areas not only met within the district during specific set-aside times, but also met with their peers in the other districts.

Involvement: Identity and power. Administrators "shared power" in the restructuring process with the creation of the CCC and SAC and their work groups. While initially dominated by administrators, the committees evolved to include a majority of teachers. Because the administration involved only a core of key

people particularly during the initiation of the restructuring, a new level in the school hierarchy emerged, resulting in a system with administrative staff on top, persons involved in the restructuring process next, with teachers less directly involved in the restructuring process comprising the third and lowest layer in the education hierarchy. As time evolved, however, bylaws were put in place which provided for the rotation of members.

Errors in the process. The teachers and administrators agreed (although the latter reluctantly so) that they had erred in the hiring of the consultant. The consultant, with administrator support, presented the restructuring plan from a "top down" perspective, and as the only way to proceed, which demanded and required teachers to follow along. Although a few key teachers had time to "pilot" certain aspects of the plan, the majority of teachers weren't allowed that luxury.

> [The administrators] came back from that [conference] so on fire that without giving the teachers much training or education--kind of said this is what we want you to do and . . . it really hasn't been allowed to just evolve. And then right away, let's go out and hire an expert. You know, I'm a firm believer that the experts are the people who are in the classrooms and that's the only way if we are going to see change is that the teachers are going to be the change force and the administration knows that but they are trying to force people into that situation. . . I don't know who it was that brought the expert in but she's set us back probably a couple of years. Definitely. . . . you know I'm sold on outcome based education, but if you want to salvage it for us now people have to have time to heal from the damage that she had done (teacher).

In response to the criticism, teachers and administrators suggested a possible return to the "Crestwood Plan," a plan which originated prior to their restructuring efforts. The Crestwood Plan allowed groups of teachers to voluntarily explore and research crucial topics and issues and then to determine the utility of their findings to their teaching. These teachers would the share their knowledge and skills only with interested teachers. No teachers would be required to participate.

Unquestioned assumptions. Although both teachers and administrators acknowledged similar errors in the process, neither of the groups questioned the lack of parent, community members, and student participation, nor the demographic representation in the restructuring process, all related to power and subjectivity. Similarly, although 11% of the student population were students identified with disabilities, none of the teachers of these students were included on any aspect of the restructuring process. A special education administrator did participate on the CCC and was heavily involved in the restructuring from its inception. Further, another administrator had extensive experience with students with disabilities. Yet, neither of the administrators consciously included teachers of students with disabilities in the process. Moreover, students with disabilities were not systematically addressed in the restructuring process, despite the fact that special education,

and its emphasis on goals and objectives within a narrowed curriculum nearly mirrors OBE.

The restructuring governance and process in Crestwood contained many promising aspects in terms of leveling power relations. The slow evolution of the process over five years and the involvement of many teachers in the process were both seeds for success. The teachers' perceptions, however, that they were coerced into articulating particular belief statements and that there was only one way in which to carry out the process and in-turn, implement the changes in the classroom, have left deep wounds.

The Crestwood Plan, however, with its emphasis on the creation of adhoc teacher groups engaged in research and dialogue over salient issues, holds great promise, given the advocacy of such groups within the paradigms of critical theory and poststructuralist theories (Skrtic, 1991). The lack of involvement of the community, parents, and students, and the blindness to the community and societal demographics, however, threatens their restructuring progress beyond the status quo.

"The right thing:" What is it and for whom?

> The more I learn about it the more excited I become and the more I feel like we're doing the right thing . . . You know I really feel that this is the right thing to do for kids and so I'm very supportive (administrator).

> They (CCC committee) asked me to come and said we'd like you to come [to a meeting] cause we want to know what you think. We want to know what you want us to do. Well I want you to do what you want to do cause I know you'll do the right thing (another administrator). . . . The right thing. We're trying to do the right thing (same administrator).
>
> . . . in education all they do is they throw crap on the barn door and whatever sticks, that's what they use. You know they just keep throwing the crap on the door and um here's new stuff, and new stuff and um that's the way it's been since I've been here (teacher recounting an explanation for the district's change efforts shared by another teacher).

The administrators were unanimous in their view that they not only wanted to do "the right thing" for students, but, in fact, their restructuring process was "the right thing" to do. Doing the "right thing" is related to how the participants identified the problem, their goals, and for whom the goals were intended. Following a discussion of these themes, I explore some of their underlying assumptions.

Identifying the problem. Teachers and administrators agreed that student failures, defined as students receiving an "F" grade in their classes, were the impetus behind restructuring, coupled with the board's mandate to be a "national class" school. Further, the problem of student failure was determined to be caused by low expectations and students and teachers needing to adhere to a specified time frame for learning, rather than giving students additional time and opportunities to achieve.

Goals of the restructuring. Given the identification of the problem as one of student failure, Crestwood's initial goal was

to decrease the failure rate of students at the high school level. Administrators and teachers reiterated that they wished to ensure that all students in the school succeed, with a motto of "failure free by '93."

Recipients of the goals. Administrators truly believed they were addressing "all" students in their restructuring goals. Issues related to goal recipients were a) students labeled "gifted," b) students labeled as in need of special education services, c) the conscious recognition of the specific characteristics of the population in which they were serving, and d) their responsibility for preparing students for productivity in society.

Administrators and teachers disagreed on who benefitted the most from the restructuring. Some felt the lower achieving students were benefiting the most, others felt the students "in the middle." All agreed, however, that the benefits for the so-called "gifted" students were more ambiguous. In fact, some parents of students labeled "gifted" protested that OBE leveled the playing field in such a way that their children would no longer be "the best" in the class, given that the majority of students would be receiving higher grades because of their extended time and opportunity to learn. These parents thought it unfair that students were given "second chances" to learn the material that their children could learn the first time around. One administrator recounted:

> [This parent] believes that OBE is somehow not going to meet the needs of her kids and that if you strip it all away, the fact that we're trying to design a system that all kids get A's and B's somehow means that her kids as she's been used to having be one of the best, will now not be special anymore.

The parents of students labeled "gifted" also felt that their children were being "held back" in their academic development by having to "wait" on many students to learn the material. Moreover, they resented their children doing "group work" and assisting other students for the same reason. One teacher reported:

> It's the struggling kids who benefit most. The other kids get bored, so I've been working on extensions. The smart kids don't like it because everyone else gets all these opportunities, so it isn't as competitive and they like to win.

In addition to students considered "gifted," the educators acknowledged that, in a system which defines specific outcomes for specific grade levels (e.g., fourth grade math outcomes), some students, regardless of time and resources, will not reach those outcomes:

> There are definitely a very small percentage of the kids and I would guess maybe 5%, 3% that probably will not reach the outcomes as specified and may need some modifications, but in a lot of cases, I would expect that those students have been in a special ed program or maybe considered for placement in one and that may be one of the ways we would determine that if that you know if they are never able to master a lot of the outcomes we'd have to take a second look and see if they needed support services.

Thus, even though the OBE literature and these practitioners proclaimed that the traditional "bell-shaped" curve of

achievement doesn't exist in this restructuring system, some students are invariably excluded from the process and outcomes.

Furthermore, even though these educators espoused the notion that their system was appropriate for all students, and that indeed "all students" would succeed, it was disquieting to note that just one administrator had a clear idea of the characteristics of the students in his[1] school. For example he clearly knew the percent of students from lower socioeconomic class families in his area of responsibility, and was gathering data on the social class characteristics of students in the "lower track" classes as compared to the "upper track" and students on the honor roll among others. He also was questioning the achievement differences between female and male students, following the media reports of disparities. Other than this administrator, however, the other educators were less clear about who exactly "all" these students were in their area of responsibility. Thus, they weren't gathering data, or targeting any particular student population, other than those students receiving failing grades. In fact, every interviewee, without exception began the interview by asking me, ". . . now what do you mean by equity?"

When questioned specifically about the preparation of their students for a "diverse" society, and the role of their restructuring efforts in this context, all the educators agreed that equity was not the impetus behind their efforts. They also

saw little value in multicultural education, citing the racial demographics of their student population. One administrator cited a district study conducted in the 70's which found that 73-75% of the graduates were going to settle within a 25 mile radius of where ever they lived at the time they went to school. Thus, even the argument that schools need to prepare their students for living and working in a diverse society did not hold up in Crestwood.

Unquestioned assumptions. The theme of "doing the right thing" evokes at least five unquestioned assumptions related to the identification of the problem, "what's right" from who's perspective?, who receives these "right" practices, the perennial bell-shaped curve, and winning.

First, Crestwood identified their district problem as one of student failing grades and the administrators asserted that they are moving beyond this perspective to ensure student success in other areas of academics. While identifying the problem in this way could be useful for developing a scaffolding to construct other school changes, this scaffolding could also lock them into narrow constructions of student problems and associated solutions (see Reyes & Capper, 1991).

Second, while the administrators were so sure about "doing the right" thing, no one discussed how the "right" thing is dependent on how the problem is framed nor did anyone question that what is considered "right" could vary according to different

personal perspectives and theoretical paradigms (see Capper & Jamison, 1992).

Third, even though all the administrators in the interviews volunteered the mantra "all students can succeed, success breeds success, and schools control the conditions of success" no one considered what they meant by "all students" thus they didn't closely examine to what extent all students were benefiting from their "right" practices.

Fourth, the "bell-shaped" curve will continue to exist in a system which doesn't allow students to demonstrate particular outcomes based on their own interests and abilities, and in ways most suitable to their mode of learning and performing (see Gardner's work on multiple intelligences).

Finally, even though these educators advocate that more students "win" in this system, they don't question the mentality of a system which needs to distinguish between "winners" and "losers" in the first place. In sum, Crestwood's administrators were sincere in their quest to do "the right thing" for "all" students to succeed, yet they failed to examine how their personal beliefs, epistemologies and associated paradigms could blind them to other perspectives of "rightness."

What's essential?: Student experiences

> What's essential? I suppose when you get right down to it, none of it is essential, except having an appreciation for [the subject] (teacher).
>
> Colleen: Do you see any connection between your outcomes for [your subject] and the school or student outcomes. . . like for students when they finish [high school]? Have you guys talked about those kinds of things?
>
> Teacher: No, we haven't. We haven't done any of that. We've been so wrapped up in trying to get this organized (after working on the development of outcomes for their specific subject area for nearly one and a half years).

Three patterns emerged within the theme of student experiences and what are considered "essential" outcomes: the development of outcomes, accountability, and grouping.

Outcome development. Student "exit" outcomes, that is, those outcomes considered to be essential for all graduates of the Crestwood School District were developed with input gathered with a survey of the community, parents, and educators in the district. Teachers then met in subject area teams during release time of one-half day per month within and among the districts to pound out outcomes for each subject area and each classroom level. They attacked math outcomes first, then followed with science. Some departments and teachers moved ahead on their own, developing outcomes across all grade levels and subject areas.

Accountability. The administrators reiterated, over, and over, how OBE made students accountable, and they had a range of mechanisms to assure accountability. These mechanisms included a

"ninth" hour period which required students to stay after school to complete their work, in-school suspension for students who failed to complete the work during ninth hour, individualized summer school sessions, and staffings. Staffings were meetings which gathered together the student, the parents, the student's teachers, and an administrator, to discuss their concerns with the students academic success. Teachers and administrators related many stories which illustrated the length to which these educators were willing to go to ensure student completion of class-work, and successful learning of course objectives. These stories included teachers working with students every minute of the day they were at school, pulling students during their lunch-hour to eat their lunch in the teacher's room while the student finished the required work, administrators visiting parents in their homes if the parents were unable to come to school for a meeting regarding a student's unfinished work, and a star basketball player who had to resign from the team for unsatisfactory work in a subject. A culture of "work must be completed, and completed with at least an A through C grade" was shared by educators and students alike. One teacher illustrated this work and success ethic:

> Some students would just say, give me the F, I don't care. That's what I deserve, that's what I earned. I had a student who went to the Assistant Principal when we first started this and said, she can't do this to me. She can't make me do this work. It's not fair. I earned this F and now she's not going to give it to me (laughing).

Some teachers and administrators differed, however, on their view of making students accountable. One teacher argued

> We have a lot of pressure on us. . . we have to run around and track these kids down. . . we're expected to.

And several teachers argued that students could not have an indefinite time to learn the material, and thus there was often a two-week limit on incompletes.

Grouping. The 5 years of restructuring in this district had little effect on the grouping of students based on ability or achievement. Counter to the "best practice" of heterogenous grouping, some of which is even considered in the OBE literature, students were tracked, from at least sixth grade through their senior year in high school.

It appeared there may have been at least some denial concerning the grouping of students. For example, when one teacher was asked about ability grouping, she emphatically asserted:

> All our classes are heterogeneously grouped. . . no tracking. I have them all in here at once.

When pushed further, the teacher acknowledged that possibly some other classes are "grouped," then admitted:

> well, yeah, I have a high [subject] class and a low [subject] class.

None of the teachers hesitated when I asked to observe their "lowest" track and "highest" track periods. They clearly identified which class periods those were. Further, one teacher

acknowledged that tracking for "high" math classes begins in the seventh grade, with one teacher designated "the placement man."

Crestwood's variation on the tracking theme, however, was that students could choose which group they wished to belong. That is, for example, students could choose whether to take "at-risk" English, "general" English, or "advanced" English. Administrators and teachers were confident that this was a fair way to address the ability grouping issue, since the students and parents chose the group themselves.

Unquestioned assumptions. Unquestioned assumptions related to discerning what's essential for student experiences, include outcomes, accountability and grouping. First, similar to discerning the "right" thing to do, these educators didn't discuss who should participate in developing student outcomes, nor consider alternative paradigms for their development. Even though the outcomes were teacher constructed--one step better than adhering to textbooks or passively responding to administrator mandates--it appeared the outcomes remained unintegrated across subject areas. Further, although the teachers were able to simmer down and sift through to the "essential" outcomes, the curriculum remained within the prevailing paradigm. That is, the paradigmatic container which contained the original textbooks and curriculum, was left unexamined. No one questioned the power associated with

knowledge production and exactly what is legitimated when outcomes are developed.

Second, all the educators agreed the accountability mechanisms bordered and crossed over into punitive means for students. Also, despite the heavy emphasis on accountability, data for measuring "success" remained scant. Records were kept which showed the decrease in failing grades for students and decreases in discipline problems, but the remaining evidence was anecdotal. Further, students could be getting their work completed and completed well, but neither the link to "exit" outcomes nor the link to the larger democratic context were clearly developed. This accountability contributed to the student reproduction of knowledge rather than their production of knowledge, and students had little influence on the planning, conduct, and evaluation of their work.

Third, while some administrators agreed that ability grouping was a "sticky issue" in the district, on another level, it appeared to be swept under the rug. These educators didn't discuss how the rhetoric of the abolition of a "bell-shaped" cure in their stories and their district documents contradicted their ability grouping practices. Administrators seemed more than satisfied that students were selecting their own groups, and that was the "fair" way to do it. No one discussed how ability grouping constrains one's access to knowledge (Oakes & Lipton, 1990).

In spite of these unquestioned assumptions, at least one administrator was cognizant of what the "restructured" school "should" look like in terms of student experiences and teachers' work-lives. For example, he clearly articulated thematic based curriculum and the merits of heterogeneous groups, but not with the zeal which might be expected, and needed, for "real" change in these areas to occur.

Flying in the fog: Teacher's worklife

> . . . we're engaged in big time systemic change. We know the direction we're heading in. We've established a leadership culture that extends into the teaching culture through our curriculum management team um so we have the leadership in place. We have the bylaws and policies in place. We have a system wide view that we're here for all the kids and we have a general acceptance that there's a high degree of ambiguity every step of the way. But as long as we know which direction we're headed in, people can understand that there's fog in this valley, that's ambiguity, but they still know because they can see from the instrument panel or whatever which direction we're heading in . . . (administrator).
>
> . . . I don't think there's a lot of things that are different about outcome based education . . . that's what a lot of the teachers are doing now (teacher)
>
> Some of us are doing it (OBE). . . but not all of us believe in it. We do our own thing. We make it fit what we'd like to do anyway with what they want (another teacher).

Regardless of the restructuring governance and process, what was considered the "right thing to do," and the development of outcomes, the restructuring shaped the teachers' day-to-day work lives in the areas of instruction and collaboration within and

across districts. All agreed, however, that there were some disadvantages to the process.

Instruction and collaboration. All teachers agreed that the OBE process assisted them in "narrowing" down the curriculum for their classes without having the pressure to "cover the entire text" by semester's end. They also agreed OBE added a measure of organization to their teaching. One teacher emphasized that by clearly stating to students the course outcomes and daily class objectives, barriers between student and teacher were broken down:

> . . . it has also changed me, I think, in my attitude toward the students although I'm in teaching because I love teenagers. Um, I wouldn't stay in it for [this many] years if I didn't (laughing), but um I feel like there is a wall that has been broken down. They understand that I like them now, and that I want them to succeed. . . I think part of it is that they are realizing that it is more work for me to put in extra tests, to meet with them one on one. They know that that's my so-called free time or after school time, or if I switch a lunch hour to meet with them, they know that I'm giving something towards their success where they used to say, well that's your job, but they can see that I'm doing extra things that maybe aren't perceived as the typical job. That I want them to succeed, whereas before I still wanted them to succeed but they didn't think so.

The teachers expectations were no longer a mystery to the student, and the reason for learning a particular skill was linked to a larger outcome. One teacher remarked:

> [My] planning is a lot different. Rather than looking at the book and following it, I'm the one who initially sits down and makes the decisions, you know, based on--well now we have department outcomes for the first year. . . and make conscious decisions about what to teach and what not to teach, rather than just going through the book like I used to. . . . My goal in mastery learning is to have mastery learning work itself out of a job. That to teach well enough to all of the kids' different learning styles and using different strategies beforehand. . . [OBE] training has made me really. . . believe all kids can learn, and all kids can succeed.

Even though one limitation of outcomes based education is that the extended curriculum is restricted by accomplishment of the core (Capper & Jamison, 1992), in practice for these teachers, this was not the case. The teachers routinely provided "extension" opportunities for all the students, regardless of prerequisite skill. Further, the teachers were truly innovative for creating "alternatives" for students to demonstrate their mastery of the material. Rather than adhering to paper and pencil measures via written assessments, the teachers routinely encouraged small group cooperative projects, which included a variety of activities such as class demonstrations and art-work, among others.

Paired with the accountability, teachers tended to believe that OBE separated the "sheep from the goats." One teacher commented:

> . . . I feel like a better teacher as far as personal advantages. Um, I feel like I've been doing everything I possibly can. You know, when students used to fail, I'd think well what did I do wrong? The whole idea if the kids fail, it's the teachers who are failing. You know I think teachers took that on a lot more than we probably should have. Now I know that I have given every opportunity I can possibly think of. . . I've done whatever I could and if the kids still failed those one or two or three students, I did what I could and what I could has been so expanded.
> . . . I guess all kids can succeed, but there is always that if they want to. Where is the line between the can'ts and the won'ts? I don't think there are any can'ts, but I still think we do have some who just won't. You can identify those more quickly through this system.

The teachers also agreed, in general, that their time with other teachers of similar subject areas in their district and with other districts was extremely valuable. In an eight-period day, they met five classes, and had three class periods for preparation and for working with students on reteaching and remediation. The teachers were released from supervisory duties for study halls and lunch-times. This schedule meant each teacher met with between 90 and 125 students each day, a number within the limits suggested by "best practice" such as those espoused by the Coalition for Essential Schools. The junior high teachers taught their five classes in the morning, then were "free" then entire afternoon for remediation and prep. One teacher commented on the collaboration time:

> If nothing else, it [has] brought some communication between us and another school district which was really neat, you know? It wouldn't had to have been OBE to make it a neat idea to get together with the teachers from [another school district] to see what they're doing. Um and if nothing else, it's gotten our district together and I've talked, and we've had time to get together with our department. . . so I think it's given us more time in this class year because we're no longer overlapping as much.

The teachers were quite concerned, however, that with fiscal restraints in the coming year, their remediation time would be eroded, and they would have at least one additional class to prepare.

Even though instruction and collaboration did change to some degree as a result of the process, the teachers didn't view these changes as broad sweeping as the administrators suggested. What began as a perceived, "shove down the throat approach" from the administration, changed to the tune that, "we are already doing a lot of these things" in some ways, to pacify veteran and newer teachers resistant to major changes in their teaching. Thus, several teachers commented that OBE was not much different than what they had been doing.

Disadvantages. One major disadvantage for these teachers was "keeping track" of the outcomes and their students' performances. While in theory, their restructuring was supposed to be guided by a computer assisted management program, in practice, these educators termed the system "unusable" due to the numerous "bugs" in the system, lack of instructional materials, and little instruction on its utility for daily classroom use.

Several teachers also questioned some of the basic principles of OBE, like "mastery" learning. One teacher felt his subject area was one in which students didn't need to master, but that an appreciation of the subject was enough. Another teacher who taught advanced subject areas argued "mastery" implies frequent use of that skill over time, and that students can't expect to "master" advanced materials which are somewhat removed from their daily lives.

Unquestioned assumptions. Two unquestioned assumptions related to teachers' work-lives spin around the uneasy truce between (a) rigid outcomes based assessments and alternative performance measures, and (b) blaming students who "fail" this system and rewarding those who succeed within it, without questioning the system itself.

First, even though several of the teachers creatively incorporated cooperative and alternative performance measures with their students, these teachers couldn't articulate the contradiction between rigidly prescribed outcomes, and their criterion-based assessments, against their cooperative projects. It is possible the teachers used these "alternative" performance measures as a secondary means, rather than as a primary means to an end. It was unclear the level of importance they assigned to this type of teaching for all students.

Second, it is encouraging that more students "succeed" under this system, and the school and teachers take increased

responsibility for student learning by claiming they control the conditions for success. For the few students who don't "succeed," however (one administrator put the figure at 3-5 percent), the system reinforced the teacher's belief that the fault lay with the student, and not with the curriculum or instruction, and then, the student would be relegated to segregated education within special education. In Crestwood, the special education population of 11 percent, most of whom are not participating in the restructuring efforts, combined with the 3-5 percent figure, puts the "failure" rate, at a conservative 11 percent. It is troubling that under this system and philosophy, nearly 10 percent of the students could be "written off" as failures. What makes restructuring more troubling is that while narrowing down the curriculum prescribed in textbooks, the restructuring fails to substantively alter the student role in the production of knowledge and life-long learning. The attitude that this restructuring more accurately separates out the "winners" and "losers" and then gives the educators permission to ignore the latter, is a system which is shirking its responsibility to those who have traditionally struggled with school--precisely those for whom restructuring is supposed to be intended.

Summary and Conclusions

This study sought to determine the constraining and enabling aspects of secondary school restructuring and if and how restructuring serves particular values and interests and silences others. A second goal was to explore the utility of feminist poststructuralists theories in educational administration research. These goals have been initially addressed by learning about the practices engaged within a framework of restructuring at a rural, midwestern high school. The major themes suggest both empowering and constraining aspects of restructuring related to the parallels and intersections of the language, subjectivity, and power, and the unquestioned, underlying assumptions.

Empowering aspects of restructuring. Three features of Crestwood stand out as potentially empowering for all students. First, the teachers I observed and interviewed were incredibly committed, dedicated, hard working, and sincerely concerned for students. This view was repeated by the administrators to me, and in presentations to their staff. The rural community and the size of the high school meant teachers exhibited strong, committed, relationships with students, and were intensely involved in many aspects of their high school experience beyond the academic ones.

Second, curriculum, instruction, and student achievement reigned as the district's centering concern. The administrators and teachers I spent time with were instructional leaders in

every sense of the word. Further, they operated from a clear district-wide view, demonstrated, for example by administrators facilitating meetings across grade levels, and secondary administrators espousing the merits and importance of the district's early childhood education program. They had a strong link with parents of students who were performing unsatisfactorily in school, and their "safety net" for students (e.g., support staff, and "at-risk" programming) was second to none.

Third, administrators eagerly sought "research-based" information, and actively pursued relations with a university as well as with neighboring community colleges and technical schools. Staff development opportunities included courses developed in cooperation with a university, and courses taught on the district campus. Teachers were encouraged to visit other school programs, and to attend staff development opportunities which were keyed to the district's goals.

Restructuring constraints. Positioning Crestwood's restructuring along side the constructs of language, subjectivity, power, and unquestioned assumptions of poststructuralist theories revealed at least three major constraints for bringing to fruition their morning mantra: ". . . and justice for all."

First, in terms of language, the authority and impetus behind restructuring clearly emanated from the administration,

school board, and their hired consultants. The restructuring discourse was made available to selected teachers, but students, community members, and parents were largely excluded from the initiation and implementation of this discourse. The language and meaning about restructuring did shift, depending on the role and institutional power of the participants. This finding is interesting given that the participants in this part of the study all basically represented the "power elite" in this district, especially in the eyes of those teachers who were less optimistic about the restructuring efforts. One teacher commented on the possible discrepancies between the administration and teachers: "I'm sure you got 'pie in the sky' from the administration." This quote aptly illustrates the competing meanings about what was "really" happening with the restructuring. The administration appeared resilient, however, in revamping and retreating from previous, "heavier" mandates on instructional practices.

In terms of power, the administrators and teachers agreed on their points of consensus and dissensus, and the points of power, control, and domination within the district hierarchy. It appeared the district wasn't afraid to confront the dissensus and rather than squelching it, provided forums for its expression, channeling it into positive change. The small district size may have contributed to this expression, given it is much more difficult for people with differing opinions to "hide" from one

another. The interpretation of dissonance perhaps followed along standard lines. For example, administrators felt some teachers were "settlers" or resistant to change and some other teachers felt administrators were "shoving the changes down their throats."

Perhaps the most disconcerting aspects of this restructuring, viewed from a poststructural perspective, was the lack of consideration given to social power issues and student identity (subjectivity), both in terms of "structural power:" students, parents, and community, and "social power:" such as social class, gender, race, and other areas of difference. The basic elements of their restructuring work--outcomes, success, all students--were embraced without discussion concerning power issues and their obligation to students for their participation in a democratic society. This aspect of the restructuring represented the largest gap between their socialization of their students into American culture via such routines as the morning pledge to the flag, their anthem of "success for all" and their actual practices.

Given these empowering and constraining features of the district's restructuring, perhaps the district should heed a recommendation voiced by one teacher: the processual elements of the Crestwood Plan, including teacher dialogue in adhocratic groups around issues and alternative approaches to their resolution. For example, rather than sweeping "grouping" under

the rug, and assuming it will just take more time, small groups of teachers could be encouraged to study the issue, see it at work in other schools, and bring in information and people to share their views. Teachers could then have opportunities to "test drive" some alternatives themselves, then make recommendations to the committee. Discussion and practice groups could also be formed around the primary constructs of restructured schools, or on other ways to conceptualize the secondary school curriculum (see Noddings, 1992). As before, students, parents, community members, all representing various power perspectives based on race, social class, and gender and other areas of difference should be included.

Implications for the use of poststructuralist theories.

One question which I consistently asked myself throughout the development and initiation of this research, is, how does the consideration of poststructuralist theories shape this research? More specifically, I questioned, to what extent feminist poststructuralist theories differed from a critical theory approach to this work? In brief, poststructural perspectives assisted in being open to multiple views, perspectives, and interpretations without any one perspective being the "right" or "wrong" one. Further, the "framework" of language, power, and subjectivity provided a useful guide beyond "generic" critical theory principles and beyond specific scholars of critical theory grounded in modernism. This study represents one small step

toward exploring the utility of feminist poststructural principles in school improvement practices. Further exploration can hopefully guide not only future research but also the day-to-day work of teachers, administrators, and students--blurring the boundaries of research and practice.

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1. To protect the anonymity of the participants, I use female and male pronouns randomly, without pairing them to the actual gender of the person to whom I am referring.